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THE

Commonweal

SILENCE ON THE LEFT

by Michael Harrington

Catholic Radicalism

by Ed Willock

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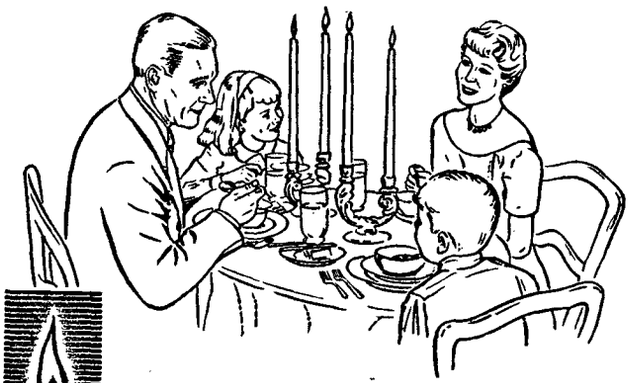

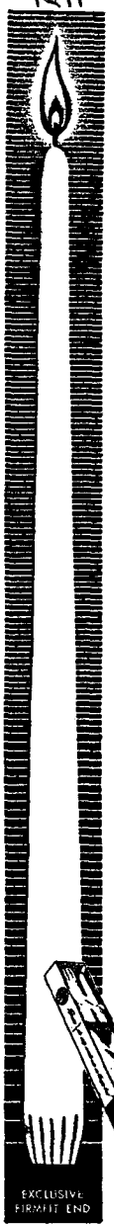

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THE COMMONWEAL
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THE Commonweal

week by week

FOUR SPEECHES; ONE QUESTION

THERE has been an international debate on the foreign policy of the United States during the past fortnight, and it has focused on one problem which has been the subject of windstorms of campaign oratory but never has been fully and publicly faced.

John Foster Dulles, Adlai Stevenson, Jawaharlal Nehru and Clement Attlee have all had their say about our conduct of foreign affairs. The last three were hitting, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, at the policies of Mr. Dulles. The problem they faced in their undertaking was that Mr. Dulles is a moving target. He was pounding Asian knuckles last month, and this month at the United Nations General Assembly he is as friendly and reasonable towards Asians as Eleanor Roosevelt. And Mr. Dulles' problem, in turn, is a party problem. He is attempting to take a firm stand on the basis of a divided Republican mind. He placates the American Legion wing of the GOP one week, and the internationalists the next, keeping ever in mind the sticky fate of Dean Acheson, the brilliant man who held the confidence and respect of everyone except the majority of American voters.

The chief point at issue between Mr. Stevenson and what has been generally regarded as the Republican foreign policy is contained in this quotation: "The door to the conference room is the door to peace. Let it never be said that America was reluctant to enter." Senator Homer Ferguson disagreed. The Republican Senator feels that we should not negotiate at a time when the Soviets would seem to want negotiation.

The question Mr. Stevenson asked (and did not answer) was: "Is our objective to discover through negotiation ways to relax tensions, or is it intensification of the cold war; is it coexistence or is it extermination of Communist power?"

Mr. Dulles then visited the great slab on the East River to deliver a speech in considerable contrast to his speeches of the past, as well as apparently in considerable contrast to the views of Senator Ferguson. He said: "Our creed does not call for exporting revolution and inciting others to violence. Let me make that emphatic. . . . We can understand the particular desire of the Russian people to have close neighbors who are friendly. We sympathize also with that desire. The United States does not want to see Russia encircled by hostile peoples. . . ."

The Secretary of State did not say just what he meant by neighbors "friendly" to Russia, but his subsequent reference to desired national independence for Russia's neighbors made it clear that he was not rationalizing the status quo. There was a second new feature to Mr. Dulles' talk. It was a note of great respect for the opinions of others, an acknowledgement of sincere diversity, and it did much to heal the hard feelings of recent weeks.

MR. Attlee and Mr. Nehru made substantially identical criticisms of American policy: that it is harsh and inflexible. Both advocated negotiations with the Soviet Union, criticized American opposition to seating India at the Asian peace conference, and advocated the admittance of Red China to the United Nations. Both statements were thoughtful; both conveniently overlooked the very real power of Syngman Rhee and the ROK army; and both generously advocated handing over to Red China the greatest bargaining lever we have in the presumably forthcoming conference. Both also presumed at least the possibility of Russia's accepting a negotiated settlement. Mr. Dulles had made a highly significant concession when he spoke of not "exporting revolution." If the Soviets had any interest in a period of negotiated peace, it would seem that they had an opportunity here to sound out the possibilities. Instead, Mr. Vishinsky replied to the American speech with the same tedious denunciations.

But it was Stevenson who asked the important question, one which has been favored with hours of sloganeering but little if any real consideration. Do we aim for a negotiated power settlement based on a divided world, looking to the erosion of time to break up the Soviet empire? Can we do this while behind

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the Iron Curtain thousands live in a world where the sun never comes up? Or can anything be done for those people short of war? No responsible government official has publicly answered these questions. Only *The New Leader* has really explored in practical terms rather than rhetoric the problem of how "liberation" might be carried out. And yet no one but a sophist would deny the tragedy. We have no sure answer. But it seems to us that this is a question which we can no longer keep hidden away in the back of our minds.

THE UNPOPULAR FIFTH

POPULAR beliefs seldom require spirited defense, and heroes are never lynched. It is not the widely accepted idea, but the unorthodox that must be protected; not the conformist but the dissenter needs the shield of law.

In a country with the tradition of the United States, one would expect such facts to be truisms. Yet from time to time a flare-up of popular feeling subjects our system of due process of law to severe attack. Currently, the refusal of certain U.S. citizens to answer questions before investigating committees is arousing public wrath, and as more and more unwilling witnesses claim its protection, the Fifth Amendment is likely to become as unpopular as the Eighteenth Amendment once was.

In times of crisis, it is easy to lose a sense of historical perspective and endanger what should be held most dear. Today many Americans indignantly point out that in the Soviet Union persons under investigation would never have the protection which the Fifth Amendment provides suspected Communists here. This is certainly true enough, but unless we candidly set out to imitate Soviet-style justice, it is hardly an argument for scrapping the Fifth Amendment.

The list of unpleasant features which are characteristic of life in the Soviet Union is a long one, ranging from periodic purges to forced-labor camps. Against such monstrous evils one does not wage war by imitation. We should no more desire to imitate Soviet lack of provision for a fair trial and due process of law than we should consider instituting slave-labor camps for the political opposition in the United States.

In the differences between the two systems lies our true strength. However sincere the motives of those making such suggestions, the cause of freedom is hardly served by attacks on the legal heritage of the West.

FARMERS' DISCONTENT

THE American farm problem can be stated in very simple terms: a capacity to produce far in excess of normal domestic needs and effective foreign demand. Under ordinary growing conditions the land now under cultivation will yield huge surpluses of cotton, wheat and other American farm products. These surpluses are currently so in evidence that storage facilities are far short of what will be required.

If the problem can be stated in simple terms, there is nothing simple about the way out. The best that Secretary Benson could do at Augusta, Wis., September 19, when he spoke under the unexplained protection of barbed wire and state troopers, was to assure the assembled farmers that the Eisenhower Administration had their interests at heart, that the Democrats were responsible for their present plight, and that the situation was under exhaustive study. He had little that was tangible to offer a none-too-friendly crowd. At the Democratic rally in Chicago three days earlier three former Secretaries of Agriculture could only differ as to a solution.

The one thing about which there is any strong, concerted sentiment is that the farm vote is important. The ins and the outs are confronted with the respective tasks of mollifying and exploiting rural discontents. To what extent will these skirmishes for the farmer's vote lead anywhere? The basic farm problem would seem to call for considerably more serious attention.

World War I caused the first big expansion of American acreages under cultivation, a development

NEXT WEEK

JOSEPH E. KOCH writes about the impact of Puerto Rican *workers upon the city of Youngstown, Ohio.*

"In the autumn of 1951 the city of Youngstown suddenly awoke to the realization that beneath its Bessemer flame-streaked skies there now resided two or three thousand citizens of Puerto Rican origin, unable to speak English, crammed into already congested slums, ready victims for exploitation. . . . Nothing could have been more remote from the minds of Ohioans than the island of Puerto Rico and its inhabitants. . . . But the *'Se habla espanol aqui'* sign in the window of the enterprising merchant, the gatherings of swarthy little men on the street corners, the serenader with his guitar, the stranger at the neighborhood tavern whose only English was 'beer' soon had everybody excitedly discussing the Puerto Ricans and the consequences of their presence."

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which was later to bring about a catastrophic drop in farm prices. Farm foreclosures and lack of purchasing power in our rural areas had a lot to do with the severity of the big depression. The fact that exports of American products have dropped off thirty-one per cent this past year (cotton, fifty-two per cent; wheat and wheat flour, thirty-six per cent) is a sign that the postwar pattern of the twenties is being repeated in a milder form. Record commodity surpluses and lower prices to growers despite supports are the inevitable result.

In depression days some hope was kindled by the prospect of new industrial uses for farm products, but even the big increase in the use of plastics has failed to result in the desired demand. Under the New and Fair Deals acreages were restricted in exchange for crop loans and benefit payments; yet the development of hybrid strains and of vast factories-in-the-fields has actually made it possible to produce more food and fiber on considerably fewer acres.

Present controls patently need some revision to meet the postwar situation. If four Secretaries of Agriculture appear unable to present a convincing solution, it would be foolhardy for this magazine to attempt offhand to spell out a whole new national farm program. A few suggestions, however, are in order.

The first, a matter of approach, devolves upon both Democratic and Republican leaders. It is to cease viewing the farm problem in terms merely of winning a certain number of key votes. The matter is of too great moment to serve as a political football. Farm leaders for their part—and voters in the farm areas—are called upon to show themselves proof against catch-phrases and roseate electoral campaign promises.

Where present surpluses are concerned, more thought should be given to putting them to good use both here in the United States and in needy foreign areas. Here is a task on which government officials, local relief authorities and private overseas agencies can work together.

But however desirable it is to employ America's surpluses to feed the world's hungry, in the long run it hardly seems politically feasible to count on this solution year after year. And in any case price supports must be continued for some time. The sooner everyone faces up to this country's excess power to produce in normal years, the better the chance for an intelligent farmer-government planned program.

HOW LONG?

DR. German Arciniegas is visiting Professor of Spanish American literature at Columbia University and former Minister of Education for the Republic of Colombia. An honorary associate of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and an officer of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, he is internationally known as a distinguished historian, educator and diplomat. He is also internationally known as a liberal—an outspoken foe of all totalitarianisms, whether of the left or of the right.

On September 16, when he arrived in New York by plane from a visit to Paris, Dr. Arciniegas was seized for "questioning" under the provisions of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act and taken to Ellis Island. No explanation for his detention was offered. "It is one of those cases that we are not free to discuss," an Immigration spokesman said. "He is going to be held at Ellis Island and questioned as a security case."

At Ellis Island Dr. Arciniegas spent the night in a dormitory with about thirty other persons. Still he was not told why he was being detained or for how long. The only "question" put to him was whether he had ever been critical of the relations between the United States and some South American countries. He replied that in his book *The State of Latin America* he had indeed been critical of United States economic assistance to certain Latin American fascist regimes.

The next day Dr. Arciniegas was released. And still no explanation was offered; the mystery remained. The official-in-charge "apologized" to the educator for having "inconvenienced" him, but it could not be learned who had ordered either his detention or his dismissal. Both the Visa Division of the State Department and the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs denied any knowledge of the case.

Dr. Arciniegas is obviously a very magnanimous man: he is reported to be "puzzled" but not "upset" by the interlude. This is certainly admirable. Citizens of the United States cannot afford such detachment, however. They should, like the Doctor, be puzzled, but they should also be upset. They should ask how long such "incidents" will go on before the more outrageous features of the McCarran-Walter Act are repealed. They should ask how many stupidities must be perpetrated, how many affronts to human dignity inflicted, how many losses to United States prestige borne before the nation's traditions of freedom, generosity and decency are reasserted.

The defenders of the Act reply, of course, that in most cases no real harm is done. Dr. Arciniegas, for example, was released. An "apology" was made.

Dr. Arciniegas is a famous man. A storm of protest was heard when news of his detention broke. But other men who are not famous are detained. No protests are heard in their behalf. No "explanations" are made—and no "apologies" are forthcoming. Ignatz Metzei, as far as we know, is still on Ellis Island.

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LABORERS ARE FEW

EVER since the first French worker-priests began their specialized apostolate a few years ago, interest in the movement has been high. In fact, the publicity these priests have received has actually handicapped them. It is essential to the very idea of the movement that they remain obscure and hidden, silently leavening the loaf. But the example of brave young curés putting aside their soutanes, sharing the deprivations and insecurity of the French working class and living by the sweat of their brows without clerical privilege or social status, has been strikingly dramatic. The worker-priests have been the subjects of numberless articles, several books and even of a best-selling French novel. They have had to live in a kind of merciless goldfish bowl.

One takes it for granted, for instance, that a Bishop, from time to time, will counsel his priests—normally with warnings against complacency, apathy and spiritual sluggishness. And normally one expects this counsel to remain unadvertised. But the worker-priests have enjoyed no such privacy. From time to time they have been given fatherly warnings by their superiors. These warnings have been publicized so widely that some readers of the Catholic press may get the impression that the warnings amount to official criticism and indicate a lack of confidence on the part of Church authorities. But, clearly, if the worker-priests did not have the blessing and support of their superiors they would not be permitted to continue.

Unquestionably, the movement is still an experiment. A certain amount of hesitation on the part of Church authorities is inevitable. Yet I think it should be remembered that the worker-priests—there are actually only ninety in France—have the confidence and support of the Church. Their work would be seriously handicapped if the impression got around that they were somehow held in ill repute. And such an impression will become inevitable if the warnings and spiritual counsel given them are over-accented while the blessing of the Church they have and the impressive results of their work are underplayed.

Recently Cardinal Saliege of Toulouse warned the French worker-priests against being so caught up in social and political movements as to lose sight of their essential priestly mission. His remarks, made at a closed priests' retreat, were deemed headline material in some sections of the American Catholic press. The prominence given to the story, I think, was unseemly, in view of the circumstances under which the warnings were given. A retreat, after all, is a time when one expects to receive spiritual counsel rather than commendation—and Cardinal Saliege was speaking privately to his own priests. The speech might better have remained a family affair. No good purpose was served by publicizing it as if it were not so much a warning *to* the worker-priests as a warning *against* them.

In the course of his address, Cardinal Saliege warned the priests that they must not confuse their role with that of the laity. Reforms in the temporal order, he insisted, are the business of the laity. The priest should concern himself with spiritual and moral matters and stand outside social movements, class struggles and partisan politics, content to inspire the laymen in their charge with Christian motivation and to fortify them with the social teachings of the Church.

The question of priestly participation in political and social movements in this country comes naturally to mind. With some lamentable exceptions, I think all will agree, American priests do not busy themselves with partisan politics. The frankly political sermon is, happily, a rarity and is bitterly resented by the laity when they hear it.

The Catholic press, which is largely in the hands of clerical editors, is something else again. Perhaps it is impossible to edit a weekly newspaper without betraying one's political bias, and some of our priest-editors clearly do so. So do several of the priest-columnists who deal with affairs of the day. One may question the propriety of this—and many (usually of an opposing political view) do. But I don't think any great harm is done as long as the priest-partisans make it clear that their political opinions do not involve the sympathies or predilection of the Church. That point should be more heavily emphasized, however, in simple fairness to the loyal Catholics who read the religious press. To plug a political line for four straight years and then piously declare that it would be unseemly for an official Catholic paper to endorse a candidate, or righteously refuse political advertising, is not enough.

On the question of the laity themselves carrying out reforms in the social order, there I think we American Catholics fall down. Priests have long been predominate in the American Catholic social movement. The laymen involved are not truly the leaders but zealous followers. Without doubt, many of the activities of the so-called "labor priests," for instance, belong properly to the laity. Father John Corridan, the "waterfront priest," to take an example, has done invaluable Christian work on the New York docks. But, as the Catholic labor paper *Work* pointed out, it should have been done by laymen.

Where are the laymen to do the work? That is the question these priests will ask. Perhaps in a transitional period like this—a time when laymen are becoming only slowly aware of their Christian responsibilities after the torpor of generations—it is still necessary for priests to do our work for us.

JOHN COGLEY.

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Silence on the Left

THE NEW DEAL MARKED THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN RADICALISM AS REVOLUTIONARIES TURNED REFORMERS.

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

We hate this rotten system
More than any mortals do:
Our aim is not to patch it up,
But to build it all anew.

SO SANG the Wobblies, the most American of American radical movements. But today, a short forty or so years after the great Lawrence strike and the organization of lumberjacks, miners and migrant workers into One Big Union, the "rotten system" persists, apparently stronger than ever, and there is no left-radical movement to speak of in America.

Is this because, as Daniel Bell suggested in the Princeton study of American socialism, the American radical movement, like the Wobbly song, concerned itself only with basic fundamental criticisms of capitalism and never entered the everyday life of the people with bread-and-butter issues? Although this was certainly a factor in the decline, I do not think it the most important one. What has happened to the American radical is not so much a personal failure as it is the outgrowth of profound economic, political and social changes within the United States. I would like to suggest a bare outline of this process and evaluate it in terms of its effect on American democracy.

Economically, one fact stands out as an explanation of what has happened to American radicalism: the real wages of the American worker increased steadily from the late nineteenth century up to 1929, and after a terrible ten years of depression, rose once again as part of a war economy which is still with us. Marx had seen two factors as leading to the overthrow of capitalism. One was the concentration of wealth in monopoly—a prediction which was startlingly accurate. The other was a leveling, or decline, of real wages. And this latter simply did not come to pass in the United States.

Yet once this is said, qualifications must immediately be made. The rise in real wages was not the result of an abstract "capitalism." It was, to a great extent, won by the American worker under the leadership of the American radical, in a bitter struggle. To achieve it, it was necessary to create a free labor movement. And in that fight, it was usually the radical who was doing the organizing and the leading. But, paradoxically, the union movement which the radical saw as the instrument of revolution became one of the strongest instruments of reform. As John Strachey recently pointed out in the *New Statesman,* Marx completely underestimated the resources of reform pressure in a political democracy.

The political expression of this economic trend was the New Deal. For here American capitalism was saved—and American radicalism was destroyed. The energies and consciousness which the radical had expected to be unleashed in the service of overthrowing the system rallied behind the New Deal and conserved the system. In the early thirties when David Dubinsky and the Garment Workers' leadership left the organized socialist movement to back Roosevelt one of the most militant and conscious sections of the American working class voted for Keynes rather than Marx, for reform rather than revolution.

But more importantly, the reform movement of the New Deal failed—or at least it did not succeed. Millions were still unemployed in 1939. There had been a serious recession, lasting from late 1936 into 1938. Prosperity was not placed on a sound basis until it rooted itself in a war economy, and the armaments sector continues today. The relation between depression and capitalism is obvious, tangible, visible. The relation between war and capitalism, especially in a country which is not under attack, is far more abstract. The radical could agitate on the basis of a depression situation. But his movement was helpless in the face of prosperity and popular support for government armament policies.

YET, if it is true that American capitalism has had its economic crisis solved by an armament sector, a plain fact must still be admitted: American capitalism has been far more resilient and resourceful than the American radical ever dreamed it could be. The radical

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did not anticipate the strength of reform action; he was destroyed by it.

Politically, there were many elements involved in the decline of the American radical movement. Two important factors were the constitutional structure of the United States, and the nature of American Stalinism.

In the United States, the executive is elected independently of the legislature. Our political parties are not programatically consistent, but rather are electoral coalitions which unite every four years behind a single candidate. In a parliamentary system, where the executive is directly responsible to his party in the legislature and rules only so long as he has their confidence, a Democratic Party of McCarran, Lehman and Jimmy Byrnes would be inconceivable.

But yet another result of this political system is that it polarizes politics into an either/or every four years. A third party which builds up local, or even state, strength in off-years must either support one of the major party candidates or resign itself to remaining purely local. A development like that of the British Labor Party through the Liberal Party into independence faces serious difficulties as a consequence of our constitutional structure.

Thus, electorally the American radical movement had many local successes in the past. But it was not able to build them into national significance, to a great extent because of the split between the executive and the legislature in the United States. Every four years the lesser-evil argument in favor of one of the major party candidates was unanswerable.

The third-party problem suggests the second factor. For American Stalinism, with its Wallace movement in 1948, successfully dissipated the capital of independent political action. More, it formed part of a pattern of twenty years in which the Communists dominated, disillusioned and destroyed radical sentiment in the United States. The twistings and turnings of the Comintern line were based on the needs of the Soviet Union and not those of the native countries of the Communist parties. With each new turn of the line, another generation of American youth was brought into radical activity, and, with the next turn, disillusioned by it.

In the thirties, the Communists were a tremendously important factor in the youth field. And successively they backed the Oxford Pledge, pacifism, the Hitler-Stalin Pact, intervention in defense of the Soviet Union, and, during the war, absolute subordination of all radical activity to the needs of the war effort. No one can count the hundreds of thousands of young American radicals who were soured by this process.

In 1948, there was a great possibility of independent political action. Liberal dissatisfaction with Truman had been building up for several years. Parts of the labor movement, the UAW for instance, were committed in principle to third-party activity. The Communists, with their magnificent talent for organization, created the Wallace movement. By November it became apparent that a vote for the Progressive Party was a vote for American Stalinism. Less than two hundred thousand stuck to their independent political action principles and voted for Norman Thomas. The vast majority voted for Truman. And the Stalinists had again set the third-party sentiment back by ten years.

THESE political factors were important in the decline of American radicalism. There were others, the "old-country" tradition of American socialism, for instance, which meant that the children of socialists broke with the movement as part of their assimilation. But the political factor was relatively unimportant. The most significant element was social.

In social terms, American radicalism was destroyed by profound changes in American society. Or rather, it would be more accurate to say, radicalism of the left was destroyed and radicalism of the right grew.

For within the years of the decline of the American radical movement, our society had become a mass society. This was true on the assembly line and in the department store. It was also true in the field of communication. The town meeting and the street speech had been replaced by the centralized apparatus of the press, radio and television. Last year, the Democrats described the "one-party" press, and accurately so. They realized that political control of the media of information was tremendously dangerous to a democracy. The radical had been experiencing this fact for over twenty years.

In his book *The Lonely Crowd,* David Riesman contrasts what he calls the "inner-directed" with the "other-directed" man. The inner-directed acts on the

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basis of principles and values. He is autonomous. Riesman likens his psychology to a gyroscope. The other-directed man has no such fixed values. He takes his values from others: those around him, those distant—the movie star, the baseball player, the radio commentator. Riesman likens his psychology to a radar apparatus.

I think Riesman is accurate when he says that we are becoming an "other-directed" nation. Such a development is fundamentally conformist. It is of a piece with the centralization of communication, relying on the mass media for its values. And if American communication is, to a large extent, in the hands of one party, it now has absolutely no voice for the radical, the nonconformist.

It has often been pointed out that the 1912 platform of the Socialist Party listed, as immediate demands, many of the reforms of the New Deal. This is usually cited to illustrate the validity of radical points of view. It gives them a useful, quasi-prophetic function. But could this happen again? Can the minority point of view state its valuable insights so that they may be eventually used? And, more importantly, isn't this trend toward mass opinion and political control of the centers of that opinion dangerous to the free market of ideas which is basic to democracy?

Whatever evaluation is placed upon this process, it was destructive to the American radical movement. For it deprived that movement of its very minimal function. Or rather it deprived radicalism of the left of its minimal function. It may secure the hegemony of radicalism of the right.

For if today's radicals of the left are isolated in small, almost powerless groups, the radicals of the right are strong. There may be one hundred thousand conscious socialists in the United States of 1953; there are certainly millions of conscious McCarthyites, and they are, in a profound sense, radicals.

THE social basis of McCarthyism is to a large extent middle-class. And the creation of a mass society has had particular significance for the political thinking of the middle class. In the twentieth century, the revolutionary class in industrialized countries has been the middle class. It is the class of Nazism and Fascism. And the reasons for this development are rooted in profound changes in the very fabric of society.

Marx had predicted that the working class would be joined by the middle class and become ever larger and ever more depressed. Yet, in the United States, the process has been reversed. The middle class has been joined by the working class, and there is a sense in which we can say that the middle class has been depressed. For the bourgeois mythology in the United States is one of class mobility. It grew out of the tremendous development of American capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is a mythology which believes in Horatio Alger.

Yet, this class mobility has been tremendously modified in the last two decades. A college education was once a guarantee of specific job opportunities and status. A degree is now consistent with a white-collar job of small pay and derogatory status, or with a place in the rigid hierarchies of the junior executive. And it is commonplace to hear someone deriding the fact that a manual worker can make more than a person who works with his mind: a machinist makes more than a school teacher, so the refrain goes.

Such a situation, in which the expectation of the middle-class mythology no longer corresponds to the middle-class reality, is a radical one. In McCarthyism it is expressed in a desire for a single simple explanation for what is happening: the Reds, the pinkos, the university professors and, recently, the erring religionists have sold us down the river.

The reformer expresses himself in proposals for a legislative program. This McCarthy does not do. Revolution is expressed in a demand for a basic change in the ruling class. In a modified sense, this is what McCarthy does when he expresses his basic philosophy in one sentence: throw the Reds out and all our ills will be solved.

It would be irresponsible to compare McCarthy with Hitler or Mussolini, or the United States with the Italy of the twenties or the Germany of the thirties. But it is necessary, I think, to realize that McCarthyism is a radical movement, that it is now *the* radical movement. The worker who became middle-class was no longer open to the radicalism of the left; but the petty-bourgeois who finds himself becoming like a worker is open to a radicalism of the right.

In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Hannah Arendt distinguishes between the mob and the class. The mob is made up of the declassed—the "doctors without patients and lawyers without clients"—and it is the popular basis of totalitarianism. There are striking similarities between Riesman's lonely crowd of the middle class, atomized, other-directed, the creature of a mass society, and Arendt's mob. The analogy can be carried too far, but it is still necessary to realize this very disturbing quality of a phenomenon like McCarthyism.

But the over-all point is that the creation of a mass society with centralized mass media has made it almost impossible for the radical of the left to play his traditional prophetic role, while this same process has altered the composition of society so that the middle class can now play a radical role in response to the demagoguery of men like McCarthy. The radical of the right, traditionally allied with the most conservative business interests, has access to the means of communi-

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cation, and he has a responsive audience. The radical of the left has neither.

AMERICAN left-radicalism has a long and honorable history. Its greatest achievement, one which embraces the Knights of Labor and the Wobblies, the Socialists and the rank-and-file Stalinists (who are often radical, in contrast to their leaders, who are purely and simply agents of totalitarianism), was the creation of a free labor movement. Yet that very movement which they made to revolutionize capitalist society has now become one of the greatest conservers of that society through its ability to reform it.

Politically, the American radical has always faced an electoral system in the United States which is hostile to the growth of national third parties. Indeed, a farmer-labor party may well emerge as the result of a factional struggle within the Democratic Party, rather than through independent political action. This political disability has been, for the last thirty years, complicated by the nature of American Stalinism, which has disillusioned generation after generation of our youth.

But more importantly, because it involves the very fabric of our democracy, American left-radicalism now struggles in a mass society which more and more denies it, or any other minority point of view, the ability to play the critical, prophetic function which it must. Such a situation is not only tragic for the radical; it is tragic for democracy as well. And the other side of this coin is that there is a radicalism, that of the right, growing out of this same situation, moneyed, and therefore not denied access to the centers of communication, and appealing to the very plight of the middle class. This last point can be over-dramatized, and that is irresponsible; it can also be ignored, which is worse.

The genius of America has been empirical and pragmatic. But there is also a need for the historical point of view, the perspective; a need for a frame of reference in which the pragmatic experiment is to be made. American left-radicalism has fulfilled this function in the past. Yet today, it is weak and impotent, and there is no force in society taking its place. The state of American radicalism of the left is not cause for the liberal or the conservative to exult; it is cause for the democrat to be profoundly disturbed.

CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA XI

Catholic Radicalism

ED WILLOCK

THE limits of Catholic orthodoxy are far more extensive than are ever explored by the average parochial society. The outposts of Catholicism are farther flung than could be realized by those who regard the all too apparent manifestations of ghetto sectarianism as intrinsic to the Faith rather than (what they are) an historical accident of immigrant Europeanism. Since the turn of the century a tradition has been in the making among Catholics which is characterized by a return to a more literal interpretation of the Gospels, a repugnance for the sort of Christianity which canonizes the familiar and damns the strange. The new tradition attempts to bring together in the same bed such strangers as religious contemplation and social consciousness.

A race of "radical" Catholics has sprung up and is now in its second generation. Its (happily) unorganized membership can be numbered in thousands. Though characteristic emphasis has been placed by this group upon lay initiative, there are perhaps (proportionally) more priests in its company than laymen. (A fact that indicates to me that the "clericalism" which so many bewail is less a matter of clerical imposition than one of immature apron-clinging by the laity.)

Although this movement may be recognized by the unconventionality of its ideas, it is by no means merely a new ideology. A failure to grasp this point has caused all sorts of mistakes. Since the birth of printing and the vaunted Age of Reason the world has been the playground for innumerable garret-philosophies. The theme has been essentially doctrinaire with social overtones. The strategy of being anti-academy saved few of these garret philosophers from the fate of being academic. The radical Catholicism of which I speak has its roots in no school of thought but rather in a renewal of Christian sympathy for the massed victims of industrial society. Though one may trace certain similarities between the ideas and approaches of radical Catholics in this country and Catholic movements in Europe, the similarity cannot be traced scholastically but is due simply to the com-

Mr. Willock was one of the co-founders of Integrity magazine.

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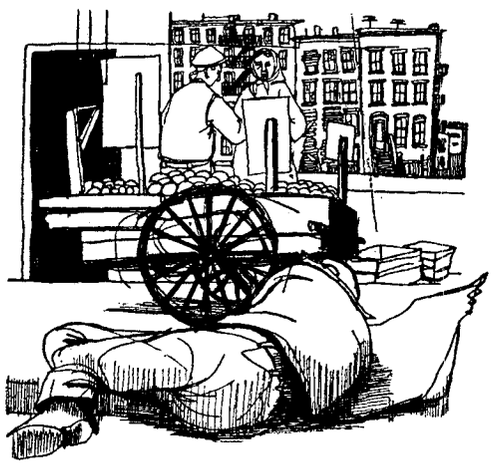
mon Faith finding itself immersed in the same social difficulties. By way of illustration I cite an incident back in 1937.

The place was Boston, in the front room of the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality. Peter Maurin, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was visiting us during a speaking tour of the New England area. One of "the boys," obviously on the bum, had just entered off the street. He mumbled something about wanting a bite to eat. Peter looked up from the book he had been reading, pulled off his glasses and muttered, "Wait here." He left the room. A moment later he returned and told the man that he could go downstairs and have some grub. The beggar was profuse in his thanks. Peter lifted two fluttering hands in a Gallic gesture and said, "No, no, no! I must thank *you*!" He darted us all a glance to see that we were attentive and shouted aloud: "Point!"



For those of us who knew him this cry of attention was not unlike a French magician's *"Voilà!"* It meant simply: "Now watch, this is it! Here is an idea to be remembered! This is the point."

For the benefit of everyone present Peter announced clearly: "I can give you bread and meat (directing his words to the guest, who stood blinking) and coffee. Yes, I can give you these—but *you*? YOU? (tapping the fellow on his shirt front) you give me the chance to practice Christian charity. You are an ambassador of God. Thank *you*!" His point was made.

THE Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality, of which there have been as many as forty scattered among the larger American cities, have been centers of radical Catholicism for twenty years. The ramifications of this point made by Peter Maurin explain the perspective peculiar to the radical Catholic, a perspective rather than a *summa,* doctrine, or party line.

Consider how contrary to prevailing norms of social service is this notion that the worker, the volunteer, is the object of reform rather than the poor! What a reversal of values, especially for Americans, who are noted the world over as a nation of evangelical busybodies intent upon "saving" everyone! During every moment of its existence the Catholic Worker has collided head-on with the criticism: "But what good do you do these bums, these drunks?" The only answer in the light of the Catholic Worker philosophy is that the House of Hospitality exists not to "do good" to its guests but to feed, clothe and house them. It exists before this for the moral reform of those who voluntarily live among and serve Christ in His poor.

The revolutionary implication of this new approach to "charity" may not be immediately obvious. So let's consider it further. Unlike most workers among the poor, the volunteers in the Catholic Worker movement feel no *divine* compulsion to "convert" the down and out, to reassimilate him into the elect society from which he has become alienated and largely cut off. They feel no conviction that they are the ambassadors of the good life, bringing Jesus to the Bowery. On the contrary. The Bowery brings Jesus to them. They are in no way prepared to inculcate *mores* of "respectability," to champion the cause of bourgeois virtue, to resist the tendency to "go native." They live among the poor and the outcast in order to be *themselves* the victims. Thus, you see, their "righteous" defenses are down, and it becomes inevitable that rather than winning they themselves will be won over. There is an esprit de corps among *les misérables* which is mighty infectious. The poor have an alarmingly candid perspective on society. One can never be overly impressed by the social facade once he has seen what lies behind. Herein is the explanation for the radical Catholic social perspective.

The Catholic Worker movement came to see society from the bottom up, that is, from the person up to the institution. They saw Hotel Metropole from the kitchen and the employes' locker room. They saw the steel industry from beside the blast furnace and from under the striker's placard. They saw the World's Fair through the eyes of the day workers who clawed the swampy flats and dug the holes out of which the wonders of the world would grow; they saw these same donkey laborers expelled when their work was finished and then driven out of New York so as to clean up the streets in preparation for the incoming visitors. They saw the ocean liners from the crew's quarters, and the agricultural industry from the sharecroppers' shacks. They saw all these things because they went among the poor, not to save but to be saved.

The Catholic Worker actually committed that frightful sin of becoming emotionally involved with their

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"cases." When they heard of a place where Negroes were ostracized they went with their placards to court the same disfavor. Who was dirty, outcast, spurned, and they were not dirty, outcast and spurned? This identification of themselves with the poor and oppressed—in whom Christians have traditionally seen Christ Himself—explains much of their techniques (or lack of techniques) and most of their doctrines.

CATHOLICISM of the conservative variety retains the anachronistic medieval perspective which allies itself with princes and principles, with law and order, with holy hearth and the closed parish. The Catholic Worker's permissive approach to the socially outcast afforded Catholics a view closer to the stocks than to the judgment seat. The betrayal of princes, the inadequacy of principles, the abuses of law, and the preference of order to justice became more apparent. Other doctrines were emphasized. A man is measured less by his orthodoxy than by his potential membership in the Mystical Body of Christ. A man is a sacred vessel, no matter how lowly he may be, much more sacred in fact than ecclesiastical pots and pans. Christ is recognized as Victim in the outcast, the ostracized, the unemployable; the emphasis is placed there rather than on His sojourn among the elect. The oneness of all mankind in charity became more significant than our several interpretations and denials of Revealed Truth.

The impact of the Catholic Worker, the penny paper and the movement that grew out of it, on the Catholic body as a whole is immediately shocking but yet, in its long-range effect, subtle. It has been, as intended, a leavening influence and consequently at its mature stage not readily isolated from the whole dough. This efficacy, of which we now have evidence, is the proof of the genius and the essential holiness of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, its founders. Two characteristics which to many appeared to be aberrations contributed greatly to the efficacy of this movement. The first was bluntness and unconventionality carried to the point of being shocking. The second was an abhorrence for organization and "looking for results." These two policies stand in glaring contrast to the usual tactful diplomacy of approach coupled with hyper-organization and closely tabulated scoring.

The *Catholic Worker* made no bones about where it stood on such unpopular questions as pacifism, neutralism toward the Spanish War, love of the Communist, full acceptance of the Negro, the spiritual Semitism of Catholics, disgust at Catholic affluence, and distrust of industrial capitalism. Peter Maurin blasted complacent Catholics to their faces and Dorothy Day demanded the furs of the well-to-do be given to clothe her cherished poor. Nuances may have been overlooked, but the point was always made. Had it been quieter or less rowdy, radical Catholicism could not have survived. In a day of mealy-mouthed clichés the Catholic Worker spoke simply yeas and nays.

HAD the Catholic Worker organized its membership, its size and scope would have been obviously formidable. Had it tabulated the results of its charities and social influence, the statistics would have been staggering. (For example, in one large city a group compiled figures which proved that of every dollar given to the community chest, ten cents reached the poor; whereas in the Catholic Worker more than ninety-nine cents of a donated dollar was spent directly upon the needy.) Yet to what avail this show of strength? With organization the Catholic Worker would have gained a national prestige and "respectability" which would have damned it in the eyes of those among whom it labored. It might have become just another organization.

Look around and count the aged, the useless and the obsolete institutions that continue to exist thanks to nothing else but the excellence of their organizational structure. Organizational techniques have been perfected in our time to insure the perpetuation of institutions which otherwise might have entered an early and well deserved grave. The Catholic Worker came into being to bring about a change of heart. All its conferences, works of mercy and rural experiments were only means to this end. It must have succeeded to some degree in this reformation, otherwise how explain its survival? It took none of the usual steps to perpetuate itself (organization, budgeting, self-definition, establishment of prestige through controlled press relations, flattering affluent people, cautious administration, etc.).

From its beginning the Catholic Worker has tottered on the brink of disaster. When its houses were penniless and in debt it continued to espouse wholly unpopular causes in utter defiance of every law of survival except trust in Divine Providence. It is almost certain that this foolhardiness has been the Catholic Worker's key to survival. This madness testified (no matter how obtuse the observer might be) to the fact that the thing that made it tick was something mysterious, other-worldly, which existed in defiance of human logic and strategy. Talk though one may (and who has not?) about preferable techniques of operation, better ways of helping the worker, more effective methods of clarification, it is doubtful if a better way could be devised to accomplish the specific result intended by the founders.

THE quantitative influence of the Catholic Worker cannot be calculated. Its qualitative influence can only be felt. I have felt it. When, in company with three

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other laymen, I founded *Integrity* magazine back in 1946, we established a policy which made us dependent for our very survival upon the efficacy of Catholic Worker indoctrination. We counted heavily upon the fact that the movement's ideas had caught on. We appealed to a Catholic audience on a national scale, and the generous response was a surprise even to us. Had not the ground been prepared for us, the plea of *Integrity* for self-criticism by American Catholics would have been laughed out of existence. *Integrity* yet survives, and with each passing year it experiences the abundant fruit of seed sown by the Catholic Worker. Those who adopt the Catholic Worker completely are few. Yet, those who have been untouched by it are fewer. Repelled by certain inevitable traces of bohemia and fanaticism (inevitable in a movement that prefers persons to institutions), hundreds have disassociated themselves from the Catholic Worker only to carry their leaven into more organized and conservative areas of society.

The influence of the Catholic Worker on the American Church, though seldom found in a concentrated form, leaves significant traces in almost every parish. There are places now, for example, where Catholics are ashamed of their luxury, where priests waive all title to clerical privilege, where churches are simply and beautifully decorated, where parishioners participate in liturgical ceremonies, where race discrimination is regarded as an abomination, where religious convictions animate social reform, where college graduates prefer manual labor, where Catholics of talent and genius remain to serve rather than chase after money, etc. Such places are legion.

With all this (as with all human movements), the Catholic Worker has its weakness. Its very abhorrence of organization is a guarantee of a certain ineffectuality in social areas where organized cooperation is of the essence. Some of these are the family, the school, the community, the productive enterprise, and the political order. An over-preoccupation with personal autonomy (even in a day when the pendulum has swung far to the other side) can blind one to the essentiality of an organized social order and consequent loyalties to authority and the common good. *Integrity,* though a magazine rather than a movement, while rejoicing in the radical tradition, has placed most of its emphasis upon the relation between personal virtue and the demands of social cooperation.

Take the family for example: *Integrity* has stressed certain aspects of family life which, were they to be generally adopted, would have a far more profound influence upon society and the spirits of men than, let us say, the nationalization of steel or granting organized labor a share in management. One such would be, for example, the re-adoption by Catholics of the ideal of a large family. Another would be a restoration to the family father of a sense of Christian vocation. And both of these would have a profound influence in the direction of decentralization, living standards which include children, domestic architecture, and the glorification of the matron rather than the model.

I HAVE mentioned here only one movement and one magazine, the Catholic Worker and *Integrity*. It would be easy to mention more, but once to begin the list would make it quite difficult to stop. The radical impetus feathers out in so many directions that one is never sure where precisely it ceases to be the predominant color and conservatism begins.

But one other movement do I dare mention as properly fitting into the radical category. That is the Friendship House movement. This is a sister-movement to the Catholic Worker, paralleling it in many respects but limiting its main concern to Negro-White relationships. Here we find again the highly significant immersion of the volunteer into the same difficulties as the sufferer. Above all, the workers at Friendship House bear witness to their disgust for segregation by setting up their houses and living in colored areas of large cities. Rather than extend lily-white hands across racial fences, they move right in and join the colored community. This form of bearing witness to a conviction, year after year, in spite of the obvious gargantuan proportions of the problem, is a technique as ancient as Christianity and the sort of foolhardy thing most likely to bring about profound reform.

Radical Catholicism in America has profited greatly from the more mature movements of a similar nature in Europe. It is my conviction, however, that in the past decade the American brand has moved considerably away from slavish imitation and is well on the way to evolving mystiques and techniques more compatible with the native climate.

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THE STAGE

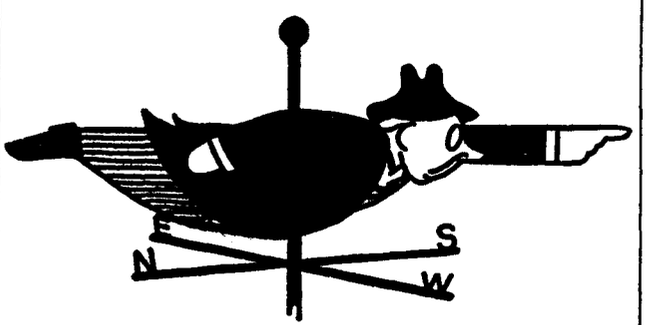
ANNA RUSSELL'S LITTLE SHOW

MISS Anna Russell offers the melancholy spectacle of a small, sure talent exhausting itself in the service of a vulgar and meretricious idea. That would seem to be the assumption that personality, like patriotism, is quite enough. It is not, of course, nor should one require circumstantial evidence beyond the debris of the late enterprise at the Vanderbilt.

Miss Russell is a gallant creature—"a splendid blonde monolith," one critic has called her—who specializes in satiric portraits of the musical world. Many of these are liberally salted with wit and original perception: her impressions of an assortment of pianists are very sprightly indeed, and when she launches into a wicked burlesque of a popular singer of the new lachrymose school ("Come back and make me mi-serable") she can be mercilessly good. But too much of her material is in desperate flight from the cabaret.

Miss Russell's larger failure, however—and it is one in which our theater conspires—lies in her refusal to discriminate between personality and artistry. Now Miss Russell is supremely a personality, but she has not yet submitted to any of the disciplines of art. She has energy instead of concentration; her taste is erratic; she seems incapable of abstinence and understatement. She has, in short, tried to make personality do the full task, and we rebel: no personality is that interesting.

The Little Show seemed to me quite that, very little; indeed, on occasion, it faded to an alarming blur on the horizon. The dancer Jean Leon Destine and an athletic young lady engaged in several specimens of what has been described, I believe, as hoodoo-voodoo, and a toothy monologuist—oh, jolly! jolly!—spurted out of the wings periodically to my extreme mystification. (*Closed at the Vanderbilt.*)



POLITICAL INSIGHT

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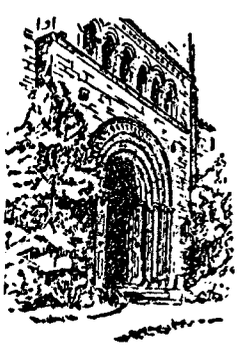

Prospective students should make early application

CARNIVAL IN FLANDERS

NIL *nisi bonum de mortuis,* but "Carnival in Flanders," which has gone to an expensive grave, would have tried the charity of the most sanguine and benign professional wakester. An abrasive cartoon of the Gallic fable *La Kermesse Heroique,* it sifted out of that film everything of richness and sophistry and ripe wisdom, and held together the disintegrating remains with a blowsy veneer of innuendo. The stylish draughtsmanship and vivid coloring of Oliver Smith's decor and Lucinda Ballard's costuming (Breughel, but sweetened) assuredly dazzled, but one becomes increasingly restive at the swelling tendency of theatre people to enlist the arts of decoration when grosser deficiences of substance and imagination cannot be masked.

And what is a musical without a score? The pallid sentimentalities with which Messrs. Burke and Van Heusen sprinkled the evening at the Century washed through the mind with the easy inconsequence of Muzak. Dolores Gray nailed the attention constantly with her elegance, authority and open, luscious voice, and a male dancer, Matt Mattox, raised the temperature agreeably with the fine shaft of Latin temperament he drove into this cold and joyless Flemish heart. But we were not amused, and at week's end another carnival folded. (*Closed at the Century*).

RICHARD HAYES.

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The Meeting of Theology and History

BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY: A Philosophy and Theology of the State. By Thomas Gilby. Longmans, Green. $5.25.

By ERWIN W. GEISSMAN

FOR years the Church-State controversy has been a part of our national scene, a seasonal subject like the World Series or the raids on bookmakers. It has been a particular godsend for amateur constitutional lawyers. Usually the tempest has been stirred by a specific occasion: the 1928 election, the Barden Bill or the attempt to appoint an American Ambassador to the Vatican. A few non-Catholic journals habitually view with alarm supposed Catholic encroachments on the sacrosanct separation of Church and State, and the diocesan press replies by triumphantly quoting the latest statistics on Catholics in the Armed Services. It is a nice sophomoric debate and usually nobody comes down hurt. Only foolish questions are asked and the answers are correspondingly foolish.

There is available, however, a core of theory provided by the theologians and oft-quoted out of popular manuals. This gives rise to discussion among Catholics of the ideal relationship between the Catholic Church and the State. To the nonprofessional the entire discussion smacks of idle dialectics. An ideal solution presupposes an ideal problem. It requires that the terms be possessed of absolute and permanent meaning. The "State" of Aristotle and of most medieval philosophers is an intellectualization and not an existent reality. The concept has permanent meaning precisely because it is a creature of dialectical inference.

A theory of the proper relationship of Church and State which presupposes an ideal state is of small help in determining the proper relationship between the Church and a particular, and inevitably nonideal, State. The relationship between the Church and particular States in the past has been conditioned to a large extent by historical phenomena, by adaptations made within a historical framework. It is difficult to see how it can ever be otherwise while we dwell in a contingent universe.

What has been especially encouraging about the work of some of the more recent theologians, such as Fathers John Courtney Murray and Gustave Weigel in this country, is their sense of historical dynamism. The theologians have belatedly discovered history. The political atmosphere of a people is the product of varied and shifting forces and has its roots in cultural antecedents which are largely of an accidental and arbitrary variety. Since the State which embodies the political culture of a given people is always to some extent an unique institution, any ideal solution can be ideal only within the order in which the problem is set.

Father Gilby's recent book has a particular relevance here. It is not intended as a controversial work, nor is it directly concerned with the Church-State controversy. It is a scholarly interpretation of Saint Thomas Aquinas on the State. On the surface, Father Gilby is concerned only with the state of dialectics, visualized here as a temporary solution to the problems of human association, a half-way point between disorder and the true Christian society which is born of "the fellowship of the spirit." He cites in this connection the aphorism of Lucas de Penna, "Friendship holds cities together." What is especially impressive throughout is the historical orientation. Saint Thomas is placed in historical context and Father Gilby's interpretation of his texts grows out of a scrupulous examination of the historical event. He balances legalism and idealism, but the shifting sands of history constantly sound the leitmotif to the debate. Hence neither human ideals nor historical exigency is ever viewed in isolation. Consider his comment on the condemnation of liberalism by Pius IX:

> Particular parties may grow old and disappear, the *Liberalismus* of the Syllabus may come to look as antiquated as the Wycliffite Movement, and Gladstonianism may stir feebly only in the memory of the aged, but when the ideals of liberalism are no longer active in the State, then it will be time for every true man to think of rebellion.

Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Father Gilby's excellent book is the continuous cross-verification of dialectics and history. This is seen as the pattern of Saint Thomas himself: "Saint Thomas's moral philosophy of which politics is a part . . . is interested in the world as it is, not as it might be if certain improbable conditions were fulfilled." This should be the cornerstone for all contemporary investigation of the subject. The Blanshardists ask what Catholics would

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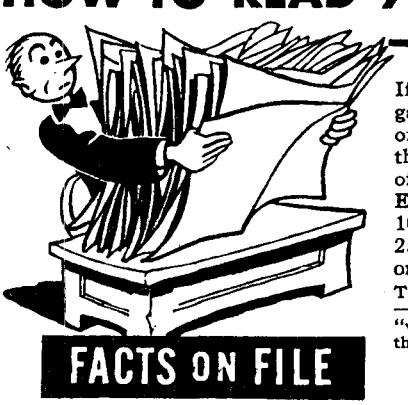

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do in the event of a Catholic America. They are asking the wrong question. No one can guarantee what any group of men *will* do under altered conditions. This is especially true when the men have not yet been born and the conditions have not yet come to pass.

What the non-Catholic has a right to ask is what political position (if any) American Catholics would be obliged to take in the event of a Catholic America. If the only assurance the non-Catholic community is given is that in any case American Catholics will act with their usual intelligence, charity and forebearance, it might be pardoned for barricading the doors and reinforcing the sub-cellar. On the other hand liberal-minded Catholics who have not studied the theological issues involved sometimes come too close to suggesting that we are committed to certain theoretical obligations which we are never guilty of fulfilling.

To the American Catholic it seems obvious that his political and social roots are in America and that he does not directly "share" the secular history of the European Catholic. The well-disposed non-Catholic might understand this better if he observed the cultural heterogeneity of the actual Catholic community instead of drawing his data from a fruitless study of our ghetto press.

Perhaps one of the happiest symptoms of our current Church-State discussion is the evidence it provides of our own growing maturity. The sophomore debate has risen to the university level. Father Murray and Father Weigel are scholars who wear their learning well and wield it like gentlemen. Father Gilby is of their company.

From Chicago

THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH. By Saul Bellow. Viking. $4.50.

By T. E. CASSIDY

AUGIE March lives quite a life. Up from the depths of poverty to the heights of success, back down, back up, and all in most peculiar fashion. Jobs, journeys, jolts—and women, women, women. Crime and college, labor unions and athletic clubs, Chicago and Mexico, slums and society, thievery and high honor: these form the panorama for Augie. And that's the book. It's a chronicle of an age and a case history of assorted human beings, most of whom are engaged, in one way or another, in using their fellow-men and helping or hurting their families and friends. A good many of these people are psychopathic; at best they have interesting eccentricities, and at worst they are criminals. And they are colorful, sometimes, and boring at other times. Augie himself never quite arrives anywhere and unless he is tormenting himself, he never is quite happy.

Saul Bellow has some fine things in this book. The characterization is complete to the point of exhaustion. The dialogue, when it's on-the-spot exchange, is sharp. When his people wander and meander in the realm of philosophy, garden variety or formal, they are windy and repetitious, and sound like cheap imitations of Proustians. The liberal-radical overtones of some sections are overdone and do not ring with authenticity. For Augie to break off his organizing activity for a quick but grand passion with one of the organizees, and then to flee to the arms of a wealthy nymphomaniac, is almost comic opera, twentieth century style.

But the best and the weirdest episode is the sojourn in Mexico with the latter lady. The two train an eagle to catch lizards, and the eagle is a flop. The society that surrounds them is full of nuts and cranks, and the eagle will catch anything and everything in the animal kingdom, except a mongoose. The Mexican stay is full of riot and rot, and at times is supremely funny.

The portraits of old families and their ties and splits are in great style. Indeed, several of them could be simply extracted and presented as very thorough national and racial profiles. These are the portraits that make the book, because as a novel there is no depth and no great theme. All the events are loosely tied, and people run in and out of the various stages of Augie's strange progress through life and the world. The one constant thread is the great but bumpy love between Augie and his money-worshipping brother, Simon. But there is no real power here and no tremendous insight that Bellow certainly was striving to achieve. I suppose the scene with Augie in a lifeboat with a maniac, off the Canary Islands, is as typical of the work as any. It's that kind of a book.

Religious Critic

LETTERS ON ART AND LITERATURE. By Francois Mauriac. Philosophical Library. $3.

By JOSEPH M. DUFFY, JR.

ATTRACTED by the author's name and by the title, the reader is liable to come to *Letters on Art and Literature* expecting a more impressive series of documents than he will find. Quite likely he may expect some large aesthetic formularizations and judgments by the recent Nobel Prize recipient. Instead, what he will find is often very good but on a scale almost everywhere more modest than the title suggests.

One of the shortcomings of the present volume is that the publishers do not identify the source of these ten brief essays in the form of letters. Not even the dates are given, although they may in some cases be inferred from the text. The letters were originally published from 1948 to 1952 in *La Table Ronde*, the Paris monthly which Mauriac helped to establish in 1948 and which he still edits.

The letters collected range in subject matter from a fiercely sarcastic complaint about a ballet-caricature of *Carmen* to a fervent and moving reply to the question, "What do you expect of a priest?" They vary in value, too, from "small-beer" journalistic opinion to wise and just judgments on important issues. The letters are personal, impassioned, sometimes querulous, almost never witty. It seems unlikely that any of them was written with

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the thought in mind of future permanent collection—which is not the same thing as saying that none of them deserves to be permanently collected.

A remarkable feature about the title of the book is that it does not include "religion" as a parallel element with "art" and "literature." As a matter of fact, religion is the primary element in all but two or three of these letters. In reading them one is struck not so much by the fact that they are the work of an artist usually writing about other artists and their performance but that they are written by an artist who appears to be sublimely, awesomely indifferent to artistic values. The letter written after the death of Bernanos, for example, describes Bernanos' religion and his politics, not his art. The fine letter to Jean Cocteau on the subject of *Bacchus* shows no concern over the quality of Cocteau's artistic achievement: it is the sacrilegious aspect of the play which provokes Mauriac's agonized and ferocious charity towards his fellow-artist.

A basis for Mauriac's attitude toward the artist may be found in his letter on the Claudel-Gide correspondence—a letter addressed, incidentally, to Jacques Rivière, who died in 1925. Mauriac explains the anxiety of so many French Catholics over Gide's eternal destiny as the result of their illogical notion that the soul of a great artist is more precious to God than that of an ordinary Christian. The folly of such a belief, Mauriac maintains, will be exposed on Judgment Day:

> On that day, I imagine, our books will not at all be taken into account, either to crush us with blame or to heap merit upon us; they will simply not exist in the thought of this God Who knows and understands the inmost secrets of the human heart, and Who has no need of these testimonies we heap upon ourselves, or these retouched portraits of ourselves in which we strike a pose—in short, our books.

The artist, Mauriac continues, is brother to the comedian, still more to the prostitute, for he gives himself to others, opening his heart as the prostitute does her body. Craving the attainment of a kind of immortality through his art, the artist foolishly places his hope in "this dust, these ashes, this nothingness."

There is an admirable humility in such lack of faith in one's craft. Such faithlessness is preferable to the egotism of those artists whose faith is in the magical possibilities of their own imagination and who consider themselves and their work worthy of infinite adoring scrutiny. At the same time, Mauriac's humility—or concentration on more important matters, if you prefer—may be subversive to art. His reply to this criticism would be, of course, that the subversion of art does not matter so long as the soul of the artist is saved. And to this, in turn, the critic might answer that the salvation of the artist is of no importance to *him*, as critic.

Life is more important than art—this is Mauriac's contention, with which we cannot disagree—and man's life centers about his relations with God and with his fellow-men. In politics Mauriac is a pessimist but not a fatalist. If he believes that Western civilization is in a process of liquidation, menaced on the one hand by Russia and on the other by the United States, he also believes that such a fate, however likely, is not inevitable. In a letter to Albert Camus on the eccentric Gary Davis movement, he states that in rational, not sentimental, policy lies the hope of securing a peaceful course between the dangers of destruction and corruption.

Despite the excellence of several of the letters, one feels a basic dissatisfaction with the choice of contents for this book. There is a startling disparity in the quality of interest stimulated by the various letters. This disparity could have been avoided by a more sensible selection, whether this would have meant shortening the volume even further or including essays not in letter form. Several of them, including the one on Gary Davis, are dated or are of such merely quotidian interest that they do not deserve reprinting. One would like to follow Mauriac's at-

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titude toward the United States up to the present; his opinions of several years ago are too incomplete to be useful. Even after a reading of Schaeffer's rejoinder to the first letter in *La Table Ronde*, the two letters on Pierre Schaeffer and his *Routier* movement seem to this reviewer to require a knowledge of the contemporary French Catholic scene vastly more particular than the average reader possesses. The translation by Maria Pei is, however, eminently readable.

THE WORLD BETWEEN THE WARS (Volume II of A World History of Our Times). By Quincy Howe. Simon and Schuster. $7.50.

THIS well-reasoned analysis of the two decades that led to World War II views the ominous happenings of the period throughout the world primarily in their relationship to the United States. The volume is straightforward and readable in style and without pedagogical apparatus except for each chapter's informal "Preview" and "Summing Up."

Mr. Howe's tone, for all his informality, is the unimpassioned tone of the historian. He is not on the lookout for scapegoats here or in foreign lands. In the last analysis, for instance, he ascribes the fatal capitulation to Hitler at Munich to Europe's exhaustion and war weariness, to the dominant sentiment among the French and British opposing war at any hazard.

But this is a social and cultural as well as a political history and Mr. Howe's references to artists, writers, actors, fashions and institutions make it easier to live again those alternately hopeful and distressing times. This sector of his colorful story ends with the ominous quiet ushered in by Munich.

E.S.S.

REVIEWERS

Erwin W. Geissman, a member of the English faculty at Fordham, is an editor of the quarterly review *Cross Currents*.

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